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Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser ..... (Liechtenstein)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 102: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/57/3, 38 (Part I), 125, 169-171, 330 and Add.1, 406, 432, 447; A/57/129-E/2002/77)

Agenda item 103: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/57/3, 286)

1. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan was among the first 50 countries to have established a National Commission on the Status of Women. The National Commission was mandated, inter alia, to examine the policy, programmes and measures adopted by the Government to promote women and gender equality. The National Policy on Women, which had been announced on 8 March 2002 to commemorate International Women's Day, focused on protection of fundamental rights, promotion of literacy and access to quality health care services, especially primary health care. It was based on relevant instruments such as the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Beijing Platform for Action. The policy also aimed to help women escape poverty by finding employment that ensured equal remuneration pursuant to International Labour Organization Convention No. 100, and to increase their participation in decision-making, which was a must for development. Thirty-three per cent of seats were now reserved for women in local legislative bodies and some 40,000 women councillors had been elected to date. The Government had also allocated 60 seats for women in the National Assembly and 188 seats in the four provincial assemblies. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women, for its part, had established an orientation programme at the national level to help newly elected women exercise effective leadership.

2. It was important not only to promote women's empowerment, but also to adopt appropriate measures to protect them from abuse. The Government had accordingly established a fund for women in distress, which sought to help victims of violence by providing bail for women who were being unjustly imprisoned, as well as to offer free legal aid and improve prison conditions. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women had established two committees, one specializing in the protection of women's legal rights and the other in the provision of legal aid, as well as several local centres for combating gender-based discrimination. Women's police posts and stations had also been established, and it was now illegal to detain women in ordinary police stations after sunset.

3. In addition, programmes had been launched to raise awareness of women's rights in accordance with the spirit of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Educational curricula had been revised and all stereotypes and sexist prejudice eliminated with a view to promoting a positive image of cooperation between women and men as equal stakeholders in society. A nationwide advocacy campaign had also been launched to raise awareness of the social, psychological and economic costs of domestic and other forms of violence against women.

4. **Mr. Dogan** (Croatia) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in women and girls (A/57/170), which was particularly pertinent at a time when, according to some estimations, approximately 4 million people in the world were victims of trafficking each year, including a significant number of women and girls. Croatia was situated in a region in which many countries had a regrettable history of trafficking in women, especially for the purposes of prostitution; it was thus particularly cognizant of the seriousness of the problem. Croatia thus wished to urge States that had yet to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, to do so without delay. In accordance with the conclusions of the International Conference on "Twenty-first Century Slavery — The Human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings", held in Rome in May 2002, Croatia believed that successful international cooperation in that domain depended on systematic and well-organized activities at the national level. Each State should thus set up a national body for combating trafficking in numan beings. Croatia, for its part, had established a national committee which had developed an action plan within the framework of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. Clearly, despite their good will, not all countries possessed the means or expertise necessary to

tackle the problem effectively. Croatia thus welcomed the efforts agreed by the Centre for International Crime Prevention of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention and the Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, which had launched various projects based on technical assistance, legislative reform, investigation and prosecution, and training for law-enforcement officials. In addition, he paid tribute to the Centre for International Crime Prevention for compiling a database of global trends, transnational routes, the volume of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and the number of victims and perpetrators of trafficking, together with the responses of the criminal justice system. It was not merely a question of combating that form of criminality in itself, but also of identifying the root causes of the phenomenon, which were social and economic in nature. His delegation thus welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme in a number of countries to combat trafficking in women and children, including by supporting relevant local initiatives and offering alternative solutions for women and children who were victims of trafficking in human beings.

5. **Ms. Pulido Santana** (Venezuela) said that despite all international efforts in recent years to improve the status of women, much remained to be done. The Government of Venezuela, for its part, had established a National Women's Institute. Through its National Office for the Protection of Women's Rights, it had also established an inter-agency agreement to ensure that the costs of DNA analysis were means-tested for people with limited resources, under the bill on paternal responsibility. The National Office had also investigated the possibility of integrating the concept of "head of household" in the Social Security Act with a view to protecting women's rights. In addition, a programme for promoting the economic rights of women had also been introduced.

6. With regard to the reference made to Venezuela in paragraph 26 of the Secretary-General's report (A/57/169) and paragraph 35 of document E/CN.4/2002/83, his delegation wished to contest the references to the provisions of the Venezuelan Penal Code. In that connection, it should be recalled that her country had sponsored and supported General Assembly resolution 55/66 on working towards the elimination of crimes towards women committed in the name of honour. In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General (A/57/432), the text of which had been distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, her Government had explained that the article of the Venezuelan Penal Code in question had been repealed by decision of the Supreme Court of Justice on 5 March 1980, more than 20 years previously. A conceptual framework was badly needed in order to clarify the question of crimes of honour and the notion of attenuating circumstances. The Secretary-General's report must be based on an in-depth study of the root causes and characteristics of crimes against women committed in the name of honour.

7. Venezuela was apprehensive about the future of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and welcomed the efforts made by the Working Group on the Future Operations of the Institute to devise a solution; it also supported the Group's recommendations. With regard to the note by the Secretary-General (A/57/452), her delegation reserved the right to make a statement on the issue in due course on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, but noted that it would be paradoxical to close the Institute precisely at a time when the international community was focusing on issues such as the advancement of women, gender equality and the participation of women in peace and sustainable development.

8. **Ms. Vorburger** (Liechtenstein) said that violence against women was still widespread, as noted in the report (E/CN.4/2002/83). It was primarily the responsibility of States to establish prevention programmes. Currently, Liechtenstein was taking part in an interregional programme against violence in the family, in which Switzerland and Austria were also participating, and which aimed to uncover cases of domestic violence and raise awareness on spousal violence. The new Act on Protection against Violence that had entered into force in 2001 provided for the expulsion of potential perpetrators of acts of violence from their homes.

9. In addition to acts of domestic violence, trafficking in persons, especially women and children, remained a key concern. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, represented a major step towards better protection of the fundamental rights recognized by the international community. Trafficking in persons often

also involved their sexual exploitation and contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Liechtenstein had accordingly established a national programme on HIV/AIDS prevention for prostitutes. Experts with specialized training visited night clubs to inform women of their rights and the risks that they were running.

10. Although equal access of women to economic resources, their economic autonomy and their full participation in decision-making were increasingly accepted by society, it was rare for women to occupy positions of responsibility. It was a particularly worrying state of affairs in a country such as Liechtenstein, where more than 50 per cent of students were women. In order to remedy the situation, a training programme was being proposed for women who wished to enter politics, and exchanges of experience between women were encouraged. Indeed, although women remained vulnerable to violence and poverty and continued to suffer from discrimination in education, work and politics, their contribution to society in the face of armed conflicts or natural disasters was vital, as was their role in peace-building and sustainable development. It was thus necessary to ensure that their rights were respected, that their work was equally remunerated and that their participation in political life was enhanced.

11. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Senegal) said that he was pleased that United Nations policies and programmes were paying greater attention to the interests of women, as well as to the deliberations at United Nations conferences and summits. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women should pursue and intensify her actions, and he was pleased that the head of State of Senegal had proposed that the future Commission of the African Union should be formed on the basis of the principle of gender equality.

12. However, women continued to be the victims of multiple forms of discrimination, violence, and even crimes supposedly committed in the name of honour or for other equally unacceptable reasons. Furthermore, women did not have the same access as men to basic social services, natural resources, land ownership, decision-making, legal assistance, etc.

13. However, as the Secretary-General had stressed in his report (A/57/170), urgent measures to deter trafficking in women and girls and their sexual exploitation must be taken through bilateral, sub-regional and regional agreements, following the example of the International Organization for Migration, particularly in West Africa.

14. For its part, his Government believed that the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action should continue, and it had begun to harmonize national legislation with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Senegal had been among the first countries to ratify its Optional Protocol. In 1999, after the passage of a law against excision, a national plan of action had been implemented to bring an end to female genital mutilation. It had been accompanied by a major campaign to raise awareness which had had positive results. Many villages had already abandoned that practice, and both urban and rural women had gained a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, a guide for Senegalese women was published regularly which addressed such matters as civil status, marriage, the right to support, problems with inheritance, reproductive health, violence against women, access to land ownership and credit, and even the right to work. It should be noted that the Senegalese Constitution guaranteed women's access to land and that the State had made major efforts to facilitate women's access to credit and microcredit. A reform of the Family Code was under way, focusing on gender equality. Many more women had taken on positions of responsibility within the Government, Parliament, the central administration and local communities. Finally, the Government had intensified its efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS, reduce the maternal mortality rate and eliminate the disparities between boys and girls in the educational system.

15. The Government of Senegal was cooperating closely with the competent agencies of the United Nations system based in Dakar, UNIFEM in particular, and hoped that steps would be taken to ensure the survival of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and allow it to continue its fundamental mission.

16. **Ms. Korneliouk** (Belarus) said that her country had been among the first to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in July 1980; in spring 2002 it had signed its Optional Protocol and had begun the process for its ratification. She was pleased that the CEDAW Committee had been able to reduce considerably the backlog of reports and that it was making efforts to

improve its working methods. She also welcomed the fact that representatives of the Central and Eastern European countries had become members of the Committee, and therefore hoped that the Committee would gain a greater appreciation for what the States of the region were doing to implement the Convention.

17. On the subject of gender equality, Belarus noted that equality before the law often was not applied in practice. Her delegation noted with satisfaction that the Economic and Social Council had placed on its agenda for its substantive session an item on the integration of a gender perspective in all United Nations system programmes and policies, which would lead to a better understanding of women's and men's issues in its own work and that of its subsidiary bodies. Concerning the situation of women in the Secretariat, she hoped that the United Nations would set an example for Member States by observing the principle of equitable geographical distribution of women holding posts in the Secretariat.

18. At the national level, Belarus had approved the second five-year plan of action for gender equality, intended to ensure equal opportunity for both sexes and to bridge the gap between de jure and de facto equality in all areas of life. In developing its plan, Belarus had endeavoured to take into account the recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee during the consideration of its third periodic report in January 2002.

19. Belarus regretted that the actions of its Government to combat violence against women and trafficking in women and girls had not been reported in greater detail in the reports of the Secretary-General on those items (A/57/169 and 170). In order to reinforce further its efforts in that area, Belarus, along with eight countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Lithuania, had undertaken a regional project in autumn 2001, financed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which consisted in launching an information and education campaign. Towards the end of 2001, Belarus had conducted an activity which had included the convening of a round table, with the participation of lawyers and psychologists, and surveys of the public.

20. To combat trafficking in persons and prostitution, the Government had adopted a package of measures. In November 2001, the Centre for Information and Policy on Gender Equality of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus, along with the Belarusian Young Christian Women's Association, had published a brochure entitled: "The problem of trafficking in persons: fact or fiction?" with the financial support of the United Nations office in the country. That brochure gave an overview of international and national legislation on trafficking in persons, provided information on all the placement agencies authorized to find employment abroad, national and foreign organization that assisted victims of trafficking and practical advice to women who wished to work abroad.

21. With regard to the future activity of INSTRAW, her delegation fully supported the Working Group and welcomed its report (A/57/330).

22. **Mr. Kafando** (Burkina Faso), describing the measures taken in Burkina Faso to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, said that his Government had focused its efforts on 10 of the 12 critical areas of concern identified by the Conference; those areas had been grouped together in five programmes devoted to poverty reduction; female human resources development; promotion and protection of the basic rights of women and of the girl child; public education and mobilization to create a positive image of women; and institutional mechanisms for implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

23. Two surveys on poverty had shown that 45.3 per cent of the population of Burkina Faso, the majority women, lived below the poverty line. Given that extreme poverty constituted a major obstacle to sustainable development, his Government had developed a strategic framework, which had been approved by the Bretton Woods institutions in 2000. In order to support its efforts, those institutions had enabled Burkina Faso to benefit from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, which had allowed the Ministry for the Advancement of Women to allocate funds from the budget for activities to assist the disadvantaged and girls.

24. In 2001, Burkina Faso had focused on acquiring technologies and building infrastructure to enable women to take up income-generating activities and to alleviate the arduousness of household tasks. Although his Government had made commendable efforts with regard to water supply, some women still had to cover long distances to obtain it. That sector had therefore been made a priority: wells had been sunk, including at

the sites of women's centres (which were favoured locations for project development and implementation), enabling them to engage in market gardening, soap-making and dyeing. Several structures had been put in place, including the support fund for women's income-generating activities, another support fund for women farmers, the national shea project and the production and training centre for young women. The first of those structures, which was financed by the Government and certain development partners, granted loans or acted as guarantor for women and provided them with training in management and marketing techniques. The second had been established in the context of the plan of action for ensuring women's access to agricultural services. The third, launched in 1995, was aimed at increasing incomes of women who grew shea, which was an abundant natural resource in some regions. The goal of the production and training centre was to contribute to the reduction of unemployment among young women, whether or not they were enrolled in school, and to provide them with the technical skills that would enable them to take up income-generating activities.

25. In addition, a human resources programme had been developed in the context of efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, non-governmental organizations and women's associations. In 2001, training courses in information technology, communication strategies and HIV/AIDS situation analysis had been offered for interested persons. Training had also been provided to associations and women's non-governmental organizations in order to familiarize them with the provision of care in the community for persons living with HIV/AIDS and project development, management, monitoring and evaluation. Lastly, training in gender issues in development had been provided to secretaries-general of ministerial departments so as to promote the integration of such issues in development projects and programmes.

26. It was essential to revitalize the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which was the only United Nations system institution working exclusively to strengthen the capacities of women. He called on the members of the Committee to adopt the draft resolution on INSTRAW by consensus.

27. **Mr. Loh** Tuck Keat (Singapore) said that, while the status of women had improved considerably in the previous century, much remained to be done for women truly to be regarded as equal partners with men. About 64 per cent of the world's illiterate adults were women, and about 60 per cent of children not enrolled in primary school were girls. In fact, there was no country in the world where women's pay was equal to that of men. In 1990, the proportion of women among the world's national lawmakers had stood at only 13 per cent.

28. The most important barrier to the advancement of women was the passive acceptance of so-called "traditional" values, which were perceived as "acceptable" social norms. However, such a situation could not continue to be accepted in the information age, when geographical barriers to the sharing of knowledge had been broken down. The global marketplace had brought together very different cultures with the result that their values and norms were constantly challenged, for better or worse.

29. In order to achieve gender equality, it was necessary, above all, for mindsets to evolve. One of the key targets of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) was to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, were able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys had equal access to all levels of education. Educated women were better equipped to realize and assert their rights. By way of example he noted the tragic fate of Afghan women under the Taliban regime. Each Government had a responsibility to ensure that all its citizens, regardless of gender or race, had equal access to education. His Government, which was fully aware of its obligations, had taken the necessary measures. In Singapore, between 1977 and 1997, the number of female undergraduates in universities had increased four times over, and young women who wished to enter non-traditional fields were encouraged to do so. However, education was not a panacea. After reaching adulthood, working women were torn between professional and family life. Promoting a balanced approach to work and life was therefore a key priority of his Government, which had adopted various measures as a result.

30. His delegation commended the work done by the United Nations Development Fund for Women and encouraged the organs of the United Nations to pursue their efforts towards the achievement of true gender equality.

31. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that his country, whose population of 130 million was composed of a majority of women, attached great importance to the participation of women in all sectors of society, notably the economic sector. Innovative ideas such as informal education and microcredit had made a considerable contribution to the liberation of women as had their participation in the leading export industry, namely, the garment industry, where they constituted 90 per cent of the labour force.

32. The economic emancipation of women had gradually led to their political empowerment. The Government and numerous political parties were headed by women. Civil society was very active in Bangladesh and strongly advocated respect for and protection of the basic rights of women. It was supported in that regard by the Government and public bodies. In other words, a society that had been bound by tradition until recently was in the midst of a considerable social change stemming from respect for values such as pluralism, democracy, good governance and human rights.

33. In accordance with the Beijing commitments, Bangladesh had adopted a national policy and national plan of action. The laws that had been adopted included the Suppression of Immoral Trafficking Act of 1993, the Women and Children Repression Act of 2000 and the Acid Crimes Control Act of 2002. Bangladesh was a party to almost all of the major international instruments relating to women's rights. It was one of the first 10 countries to have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In this regard, the recent election of Bangladesh to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women constituted recognition of the efforts that it had made in that sphere.

34. With regard to the rights of girl children, Bangladesh was aware that the road ahead was long, but it believed it was on the right track. A number of the successes that had been achieved in this field could even be worthy of emulation by societies in a comparable situation. In Afghanistan, for example, Bangladeshi non-governmental organizations already played an active role and shared experience with the Afghan community.

35. At the international level, particular importance should be attached to the situation of women in armed conflicts, violence against women and trafficking in women and girls, as well as the suffering endured by women living under occupation, such as in Palestine. With regard to crimes committed in the name of honour, he said that cruelty to women could not promote honour in a society. He recalled that it had been during the Bangladesh Presidency of the Security Council in March 2000 that the very first statement on women and peace had been made on the occasion of International Women's Day. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) should be applied universally and, although progress had been achieved, much remained to be done in order to ensure better representation of women at all levels in the decision-making process concerning conflicts.

36. His delegation endorsed the views of the Group of 77 and China on the report of the Working Group on the Future Operations of INSTRAW (A/57/330).

37. **Mr. Konfourou** (Mali) said that his country endorsed the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

38. Malian women, who constituted 51.2 per cent of the population, had always played a vital role in the stability and cohesion of social, economic and political life at the national level, as they had done at the level of the African continent. They faced numerous problems, such as a heavy domestic burden, illiteracy, lack of training and information, poverty, precarious health, negative impacts of the structural adjustment programme and environmental degradation, and their position was not enviable, even though the Malian Constitution recognized the principle of gender equality.

39. Over the years, therefore, successive Governments had adopted numerous measures in order to improve the situation. They included the creation of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family in 1997; accession to the CEDAW Convention, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Beijing Platform for Action; adoption of the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (1996-2000); and the elaboration of a new action plan for the period 2002-2006. The policy had yielded good results, including access to credit, provision of facilities to women in rural areas and training in new techniques and technologies, and the economic situation of Malian women had made considerable strides. Their health had also improved,

owing to the creation of community health centres, the establishment of a national committee to combat practices harmful to the health of mothers and children, the adoption of a law on reproductive health, a plan for social mobilization and a campaign to promote reproductive health. At the educational level, efforts had been made to fight illiteracy and educate migrant girls and women in marginal urban areas. At the legislative level, an individual and family code had been adopted and an action plan against gender-based violence implemented. There had been marked progress in the representation of women in the country's public life. Finally, in the sphere of the environment, women had received training in better management of natural resources.

40. He emphasized the role played by Malian women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and paid homage to the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network for its contribution to the quest for peace in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. Finally, he mentioned the United Nations regional training workshop held in Bamako at the beginning of 2003 on national capacity-building for the promotion of gender equality in Africa.

41. **Ms. Taracena Secaira** (Guatemala) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Rio Group. She listed the various measures taken by her Government to implement the international conventions to which Guatemala had acceded and to address the country's specific needs. As well as submitting its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Guatemala had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention and had introduced a policy for social development and population, focused primarily on reproductive health. For the Guatemalan population was very young, owing to an average annual growth rate of 2.64 per cent in the period 1995-2000, with women of childbearing age and persons under the age of 18 making up two thirds of the population.

42. Her Government had also elaborated a national policy for the promotion and development of women and a plan for equal opportunities for the period 2001-2006. It was therefore surprised at the references to Guatemala made in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/2002/83), which did not reflect either the provisions of the Penal Code or any widespread cultural practices.

43. **Mr. Tekin** (Turkey) said that his Government was continuing its efforts to achieve full gender equality and was taking legislative steps to eliminate the discriminatory arrangements that remained. Thus, the constitutional amendments adopted in October 2001 had redefined the role of women within the family on the basis of equality, and the new Civil Code, which had entered into force in January 2002, had substantially improved the status of women in the family by taking a modernist approach. In addition, the legislative reform package approved by the Turkish Parliament in August 2002 had led to the adoption of specific and innovative legislation concerning trafficking in persons, including women and children.

44. While those legal reforms constituted a major accomplishment, it was not sufficient to adopt measures; it was also necessary to secure their implementation, including by organizing information campaigns and initiatives with the participation of the media and civil society. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in all government policies and programmes was an ongoing process in Turkey, and the contribution of academic bodies and non-governmental organizations to those efforts was helping to raise public awareness of the changes under way and to support government action in that area.

45. His Government was seeking to strengthen its international commitments regarding the advancement of women. He noted, by way of example, that Turkey had withdrawn its reservations to article 15, paragraphs 2 and 4, and article 16, paragraphs 1 (c), 1 (d), 1 (f) and 1 (g), of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Turkey had also transmitted to the United Nations Secretariat its instrument of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

46. His Government attached great importance to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and followed very closely the activities of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. It was pleased to note that the Committee's Turkish member would preside over its work from January 2003.

47. Recalling that Turkey had hosted in Ankara, from 6 to 9 November 2001, an expert group meeting organized by the Division for the Advancement of

Women, the conclusions of which had been submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2002, he emphasized the value that Turkey attached to its cooperation with the United Nations with regard to the advancement of women.

48. **Ms. G/Mariam** (Ethiopia) said that poverty was the main obstacle to the full realization of gender equality in Ethiopia. Environmental degradation and lack of infrastructure, among other factors, only exacerbated the situation, particularly in rural areas, which were home to 85 per cent of the population, the majority women, whose work represented 90 per cent of agricultural production.

49. One of her Government's main development policies was the poverty reduction strategy, which was being implemented within the framework of agricultural development-led industrialization aimed at increasing production and productivity and, ultimately, economic growth. Her delegation also wished to highlight the five-year programme cycle for development, peace and democracy, a people-centred initiative with a strong focus on the rural population; the programme was aimed at strengthening food security and broadening access to employment with a view to alleviating poverty.

50. Education and health were two priority areas for action for the advancement of women. The main goal of Ethiopia's education and training policy was to change public perceptions of the role of women. As a result, the female enrolment rate at the primary level had increased from 9.9 to 40.6 per cent between 1994/1995 and 2000/2001. Regarding health, policies and programmes had been developed to improve reproductive health and reduce maternal and infant mortality, and HIV/AIDS prevention had been integrated in family planning services. She noted that health service coverage had increased from 48 per cent in 1994/1995 to 54 per cent in 2000/2001.

51. Far-reaching reforms had been introduced in the Ethiopian legal system in order to ensure the protection of women's rights. Thus, family law now granted women more rights with regard to marriage, divorce and adoption.

52. Her Government had submitted to the Division for the Advancement of Women, on 25 September 2002, the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Ethiopia on the implementation of the Convention.

53. Having listed the various summits, conferences and assemblies held over the past three years, each of which had underscored in its action plan the need for the integration of a gender perspective, she stressed the importance of implementing the commitments made at those events. Her Government considered that the goals of sustainable development could be achieved only with the full participation of women, who constituted half the world's population.

54. She praised the efforts made to increase women's representation in the United Nations system, but was concerned by the small increase in the number of professional women, a matter which should be urgently addressed. With respect to the situation of INSTRAW, Ethiopia believed that it was unwise to jeopardize the future of the only institution devoted to research, training and dissemination of information on gender at a time when the entire world agreed that gender equality was a determinant factor in development activities.

55. **Mr. Cherif** (Tunisia) said that his country, which was currently presiding over the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, welcomed the gender-specific orientation of the final recommendations adopted at the relevant major international conferences and meetings, whose main topics he listed. His delegation believed that those recommendations should be scrupulously followed and implemented at the national, regional and international levels.

56. Despite the undeniable progress made in the promotion of women, Tunisia was troubled by the inequalities that persisted in Africa, particularly in regions afflicted by poverty, illiteracy, marginalization or armed conflict. The facts clearly demonstrated a link between poverty in general and the deteriorating situation of women. The international community must mobilize on behalf of the developing countries, in particular by creating appropriate mechanisms for reducing poverty. Tunisia had proposed the creation of a world solidarity fund, which the World Summit on Sustainable Development had taken up. His Government hoped that the current session would result in the establishment of such a fund and the formulation of its operational modalities.

57. His Government attached particular importance to the advancement of women's rights. He noted that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

Against Women had made very positive comments on the report presented by Tunisia on 14 June 2002, encouraging that country to continue to work to improve the already privileged status of Tunisian women.

58. The political will to promote the rights of women has been particularly evident in legislative reforms and amendments to the Constitution and the principal codes with a view to eliminating all measures that discriminated against women. Underlying that approach was a concern for preserving the particular characteristics of the civilization and the culture without rejecting the universal values of the modern world.

59. He enumerated a number of other measures that aimed to enhance the rights of women, in particular the setting up of a national commission on women and development and a national council for women and the family, the implementation of a strategy for the promotion of women and the adoption of a planning method based on social gender.

60. Turning to the question of violence against women, he said that Tunisia welcomed the efforts being made to prevent domestic violence and indicated that his Government had adopted legislative and institutional provisions for that purpose, in particular by amending the Personal Status Code and the Penal Code. A victim care system had been set up, and studies on the scope and impact of domestic violence had been undertaken, with a view to protecting society from its consequences.

61. Noting his deep concern regarding the daily violence suffered by the Palestinians, he said, by way of conclusion, that it was the international community's responsibility to put an end to Israeli practices and to induce Israel to abide by international law and international humanitarian law, as well as by the relevant Security Council resolutions.

62. **Mr. Ahmad** (Iraq) said that the international community was doing its utmost to ensure that women enjoyed all fundamental rights and freedoms, as called for by United Nations conferences and by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, whose objective was to protect women from all forms of discrimination and violence and to strengthen their participation in political, civil and economic life. Nonetheless, much remained to be done, since foreign occupation, military aggression, instability, the absence of peace, economic sanctions, the widening of the gap between the North and the South, the debt burden, illiteracy and disease hindered such efforts.

63. The international community must endeavour to alleviate the negative political, economic, social and cultural effects of globalization on third world countries but also its impact on sustainable development. Aware of the need to improve the status of women, his Government was doing its utmost to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. It had established a national strategy for that purpose and was carrying out policies to allow women to enjoy their rights and to share their views with decision makers.

64. The economic embargo imposed on Iraq for the preceding 12 years had had an adverse impact on all aspects of life, including the fundamental rights of women and children. In view of the serious deterioration of the economic situation and of living conditions, women had to work harder to care for their households and therefore had to cut back on their participation in other activities. The embargo had also weakened the health system, which could no longer respond to the demands for health care services. There had consequently been an increase in illness in Iraq, in particular among women of child-bearing age and children, who represented two thirds of the population. The maternal mortality rate was 294 per 10,000 live births.

65. The use by American and British forces of depleted uranium shells had had a serious impact on the environment and had caused the emergence of unusual illnesses in women, including malignant tumours, leukaemia, an increase in the number of Down's syndrome children and unexplained sterility. According to the latest Ministry of Health statistics, 3,894 women had developed cancer in 2000, and birth defects were more frequent among girls than among boys (58 per cent).

66. He also drew attention to the situation in the Palestinian occupied territories, where the rights of women were being flouted as a result of the policy being carried out by the Israeli occupying forces (settlements, expulsion, destruction of infrastructure, embargo and murder). The international community must firmly condemn such barbarous actions, which violated basic human rights.

67. **Ms. Alhaj-Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the laws and work programmes established by her Government took into account the essential role played by women, alongside men, in the development of society. Efforts were being made to improve the situation of women and ensure equality of rights, duties and opportunities between men and women in all areas. The national strategy for the advancement of women, in force until 2005 was intended to follow up the relevant conventions and conferences, particularly the Beijing Platform for Action and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

68. Tangible progress in the promotion of women had been made in all areas. At the political level, women were in decision-making posts in ministries, legislative and judicial bodies and trade unions and were taking part in regional and international conferences, where they put forward the Government's policies. At the economic level, women were given equal treatment with men in employment and wages, seminars were held for women entrepreneurs, and the Government was supporting the role of rural women in the management of natural resources. In the social sphere, considerable progress had been observed in women's health care in both urban and rural areas. Furthermore, various laws in the Syrian Arab Republic prohibited any offence or practice likely to be detrimental to women's health or rights. Education was free, and the illiteracy rate among women was falling.

69. Her delegation hoped that the international community would follow up the Beijing Platform for Action and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly without applying double standards. Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese women living under Israeli occupation in the Syrian Golan, the Palestinian territories and Lebanon were constantly being deprived of all their rights, including protection, health care, education and employment, and they were subjected to the worst forms of discrimination as a result of the Israeli policy of repression, colonization and economic embargo.

70. Women's groups in the Syrian Arab Republic, in collaboration with interested international organizations, would continue to monitor the situation of Syrian women living in the occupied Syrian Golan in order to help them win back their rights. Without an end to the occupation of those territories and a return to peace, any discussion of the advancement of women would be pointless.

71. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that, while her delegation conceded that significant progress had been made, there was still a long way to go. The international community must continue and intensify its efforts in order to attain the goals of advancement and empowerment of women.

72. The aspirations of Palestinian women were no different from those of other women; however, they had suffered under 35 years of Israeli occupation and, over the past two years, any attempt to implement a viable plan of action for women had proved nearly impossible. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, had deteriorated at an alarming rate, impacting all aspects of the lives of Palestinian families. Numerous United Nations reports had described that situation and warned of the risk of a humanitarian catastrophe.

73. Since September 2000, the Palestinian people had been the victims of flagrant violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces: 1,860 civilians, including many women and children had been killed and more than 35,000 people had been injured; thousands of families had been left homeless when their homes had been damaged or demolished; the Israeli occupation forces had confiscated or destroyed thousands of hectares of Palestinian agricultural land, robbing the inhabitants of their livelihood, and Palestinian families, illegally confined within enclaves by the construction of Israeli settlements and bypass roads, were living in a state of "apartheid".

74. Israel, the occupying Power, also continued to impose severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including humanitarian and medical aid and United Nations personnel, making rapid access to hospitals difficult; that in turn led to medical complications and sometimes death.

75. The military siege imposed by Israel had totally disrupted the lives of Palestinian people causing a dire humanitarian crisis that had lasted for many months. The deteriorating economic situation and the closure of areas of territory had negatively affected the nutritional status of women and children, and disruptions in the provision of health services would certainly have long-term consequences for the health of the population. More than 1,000 days of schooling had been lost, and 75 per cent of Palestinians were living below the poverty line. The severity of the aggression and

constant violence suffered by Palestinian women could not be overemphasized. Violence also caused psychological trauma, and many women were living in fear and anxiety.

76. Women's organizations, among others, had suffered considerable financial losses owing to the policies and measures imposed by Israel; such losses had severely curtailed their ability to help those most in need and deepened the problems facing Palestinian women.

77. One could not seriously address the advancement of the Palestinian people, particularly Palestinian women, while the Israeli occupation continued. The international community must take urgent action: the Israeli occupation must end and a Palestinian State must be established. Only then could a just and lasting peace be achieved, resulting in a dramatic improvement in the situation, not only of women but of the Palestinian population as a whole.

78. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

79. His delegation recognized the decisive nature of all efforts being made for the promotion of women; however, despite the progress achieved, many women throughout the world were victims of discrimination and were not fully enjoying their fundamental rights. The attainment of the agreed goals required not only the will of all parties, but also the mobilization of adequate financial and human resources, strengthened international cooperation and increased assistance to developing countries.

80. His Government attached great importance to the promotion and protection of women's rights. Women should play a full part in socio-economic and political processes in accordance with their role in the development of their countries. To that end, his Government had launched a national programme based on a global, integrated approach to improve the situation of women in all areas. That approach had given rise to a new culture based on the Islamic values of tolerance and respect for others, constructively reconciling modernity with Moroccan identity.

81. Despite continuing difficulties, the situation of women had improved in the areas of education, health and employment and they were better protected against violence and discrimination. Examples of that progress, which made society more aware of women's issues, were the consensus law on the Electoral Code, which required that at least 30 parliamentary seats must be held by women. At the last election, 35 women had been elected to the House of Representatives, where they held 11 per cent of seats in comparison to 0.6 per cent after the previous election.

82. Pursuant to the royal directives of King Mohammed VI, an advisory committee had been established with responsibility for reforming the Code of Personal Status (*Mudawana*). The committee would submit its report and proposals by the end of 2002. In support of the implementation of its five-year plan, the Government had also set up a thematic committee on women, essentially responsible for promoting the integration of women in development; the committee's activities had promoted the introduction of a gender perspective in all ministerial departments. In the same spirit, the Ministry for Women had organized workshops and seminars.

83. The Moroccan Government had undertaken a review of national legislation in order to harmonize it with international instruments to which Morocco was a party. The second periodic report of Morocco, submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in September 1999, would be examined by that Committee at its twenty-eighth session. At the same time, the Moroccan authorities had taken concrete measures in favour of women in collaboration with United Nations bodies and other countries, in areas such as health and education. The Government had organized information campaigns on women's rights and the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The goals it had adopted included a 50 per cent reduction in illiteracy among rural women, compulsory school enrolment for children aged six or more and reductions in unemployment rates among women. Many initiatives had been introduced to combat violence against women, including conferences, awareness campaigns and the creation of reception centres, and relevant legislative instruments were being reviewed. Lastly, on 24 and 25 September 2002 in Rabat, to contribute to the suppression of trafficking in women and girls, Morocco had organized a bi-regional meeting to follow up the Africa-Europe Summit, whose agenda had included the issue of trafficking in humans. Despite

that progress, the Government was aware of the additional efforts needed to enable women to play their part fully.

84. Lastly, his delegation declared that it attached great importance to the functions and role of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). It therefore supported the recommendations of the Working Group on the future operations of INSTRAW (A/57/330) and believed that sufficient financial and human resources should be allocated to that body to enable it to fulfil its mandate appropriately.

85. **Mr. Vixay** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that he wished to associate himself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The progressive policies adopted by many Governments had enabled gender equality to be improved; however, owing to the various social, cultural and economic conditions of Member States, many problems remained to be addressed, particularly for women living in rural or remote areas, whose needs in terms of education, health care and economic and political rights must be met. In order to remedy that situation, special emphasis must be placed on poverty eradication and on the realization of sustainable rural development, particularly in developing countries.

86. His Government had adopted a population development policy and an action plan for women aimed at increasing their participation in the development process. The Lao Women's Union was the national mechanism responsible for ensuring the advancement of women and respect for equality of rights between the two sexes. It oversaw the implementation of all government policies and programmes relating to women's development and gender issues. As a result, women had become more aware of their rights and obligations and, irrespective of the ethnic group to which they belonged and whether they lived in urban or rural areas, they were better able to protect their rights and those of their children and were more familiar with the use of new techniques for improving production, nutrition, health, education and family income. The number of women leaders had increased in recent years, not only in business, but also in public agencies. In the National Assembly, the proportion of women deputies had increased from 9.4 per cent in 1992 to 20.18 per cent in 2002.

87. His Government had taken various measures to eliminate violence against women. They included coordinating the efforts of the concerned parties to find a solution to that problem, organizing training courses, establishing a legal counselling office, adopting effective prevention measures and providing assistance to victims.

88. **Ms. Awino** (Uganda) said that, since Uganda's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985 and the submission of its initial and second and third periodic reports, her Government had promulgated a gender-sensitive Constitution in 1995, established national machinery for the advancement of women, adopted a national plan of action for women, reformed its legislation and taken specific measures to increase women's participation in decision-making and broaden their access to education and credit facilities. It had embarked on a programme of gender sensitization and gender mainstreaming in various policies and sectors at the local and national levels.

89. Since Uganda was primarily an agricultural country, the structure of the economy had major implications for rural women in particular, who produced 80 per cent of foodstuffs and represented 70 per cent of the agricultural labour force. A high percentage of women remained in the informal subsistence sector, although a certain number had paid employment in the commercial and industrial sectors. Efforts were being made to give them access to credit facilities through non-traditional financial institutions.

90. While education was provided on a non-discriminatory basis, girls' schooling lagged behind that of boys. In 1997, in order to address that imbalance, her Government had launched a universal primary education programme, which offered free primary education for four children, including at least two girls, from each rural family.

91. As anxious as her Government was to improve the political, social and economic conditions of the population, a large portion of its expenditure was concentrated on securing peace and stability in the north and west of the country, where insecurity still prevailed owing to civil strife.

92. Since the percentage of women with HIV infection remained high, the national health policy and health sector investment plan, which was centred on preventive care, emphasized community-based

interventions aimed at promoting health, disease control and rehabilitation services; as a result, the proportion of the population infected with HIV/AIDS had fallen from 22 to 6.1 per cent. Uganda had placed particular emphasis on awareness-raising, voluntary testing and counselling services, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

93. With regard to trafficking in women and girls, her delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/170). Her Government was working towards the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and it urged all Member States to make a concerted effort to secure the early entry into force of those instruments.

94. **Mr. Husain** (Organization of the Islamic Conference) said he shared the view of the Chairman of the Group of 77 that, while there had been progress in the realization of the goals set, many problems remained, including that of poverty, which, combined with the transformation in the world economy as a result of globalization, often adversely affected socio-economic development, particularly in developing countries, and worsened the situation of women and children, who were the hardest hit.

95. At its twenty-ninth session, held in Khartoum in June 2002, the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers had adopted a resolution indicating that the goals and principles of peace, justice and equality for all human beings could only be achieved through the participation of all Muslims, including Muslim women, who represented half of the world's Islamic society. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had also established a governmental working group to harmonize the positions of all member States on issues relating to women in international forums, in particular the United Nations.

96. OIC shared the concern of the international community about violence against women, in particular honour crimes against them, and trafficking in women and girls, practices which had been outlawed by the Islamic State for centuries until external influences had led segments of Islamic society astray.

97. With regard to the report of the Working Group on the Future Operations of INSTRAW (A/57/330), OIC welcomed the fact that, despite its resource constraints and the lingering uncertainties about its future, INSTRAW had been able to produce research material in several areas, inter alia on the situation of older women and strategies to combat violence against women. OIC shared the view expressed by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China regarding the findings of the Working Group and hoped that it would be possible to strengthen and stabilize the Institute.

98. OIC had read the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/57/447) and had taken note of the useful information concerning progress made towards the goal of the 50 per cent gender balance in the Secretariat and the outstanding areas of concern. It would be helpful, however, if future reports on that issue could provide information on the geographical distribution of the posts held by women in the United Nations system.

99. **Mr. Paclisanu** (International Committee of the Red Cross) said that he welcomed the increased attention paid by the international community to the plight of women affected by armed conflict.

100. In 2001, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had published the results of a survey entitled "Women facing war", which had examined a number of issues, including personal safety, access to health care and detention. ICRC had provided an overview of each of those issues, reviewed them from the point of view of international law, detailed its operational response and made recommendations. The survey had shown that, although the suffering of the women in question was comparable, their experiences of war were diverse: some of them took part in the hostilities, others participated actively in social or political groupings and almost all of them assumed essential responsibilities for their households or communities. Since women were not passive recipients, the survey had recommended that they should be involved in all stages of programmes carried out in their favour, so that their needs could be taken into account throughout the programme life cycle and to ensure that they were not exploited. The survey had also shown that, on the whole, the protection provided by international humanitarian law and human rights and refugee legislation was adequate and that the main challenge lay in the implementation of those norms. For instance, sexual violence was strongly prohibited by international humanitarian law but was not effectively suppressed at the national level, on account

of a lack of proper investigation and punishment, inadequate training and an absence of clear directives applicable to all those who bore arms.

101. In order to disseminate the findings of the survey more widely among Governments, organizations and individuals, ICRC had made use of various communication tools, including films and fact sheets. Those tools had also found their way into military classrooms and universities, and it was hoped that they would contribute towards improved protection for women.

102. ICRC had developed a plan of action, containing short- and long-term objectives, in order to implement the key findings of the survey and was in the process of formulating guidelines on the protection of women in armed conflicts, which were due to be published at the end of 2003.

103. In conclusion, he recalled that it was incumbent upon on the international community to better support women during the hardships of armed conflict. Efforts must be made to promote knowledge of and compliance with the obligations imposed by international humanitarian law in order to turn the protection it accorded to women and girls into a reality.

104. **Ms. Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) said that she wished to associate herself with the statements made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Women's participation in the development process would be fully integrated into the development policies of her Government, which would be drafting new national legislation in accordance with the provisions of the conventions relating to the protection of women's rights.

105. Her Government had developed a national action plan for 2000-2005 and had established a gender-based management system in order to implement it. That system was composed of networks, mechanisms and various processes and would ensure that the goals to which Suriname was committed would be achieved and raise awareness of gender equality issues through constructive partnerships between the Government, civil society (namely non-governmental organizations) and international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

106. Suriname was committed to pursuing respect for women's human rights, the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and equal participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels, while emphasizing the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality; all were issues on the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women.

107. The UNIFEM programme on "Women and Sustainable Human Development in Suriname", which had run from July 1998 to January 2002, had included a pilot project to strengthen the position of women in the interior (based on sustainable livelihoods), gender-specific training programmes for government officials, various publications to improve national gender awareness, an analysis of the situation of women in society from the standpoints of education, health, the economy, decision-making, human rights, poverty and violence and the drafting of the national report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the country's combined initial and second periodic reports had been presented to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in June 2002.

108. During the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, Suriname had put forward a draft resolution on the situation of older women, which had been adopted without a vote as resolution 56/126; it planned to submit a revised version of that resolution at the fifty-seventh session. Instead of being acknowledged for their contribution to their families, their children and the economic and social development of their countries, older women were often abused and cast aside. Suriname hoped that the Committee would lend support to the resolution, which had the full backing of the international community and non-governmental organizations.

109. **Ms. Kusorgbor** (Ghana) said that implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was being hampered by poverty, prejudice and sexist behaviour; globalization had further intensified existing inequality and insecurity for many women, particularly in developing countries. For that reason, women should be key actors in the process of globalization. Ghana had established a ministry for the advancement of women to encourage their representation in decision-making at the highest level

of Government, thereby raising public awareness of women's issues and making them part of national policies and programmes. The Ministry for Women's and Children's Affairs had taken steps to close the widening economic gap between men and women and thus halt the continued feminization of poverty. Improving Ghanaian women's economic situation would ultimately promote economic and social development in society as a whole. That conclusion had led the Ministry to establish a National Development Fund to support the extension of credit facilities to women for entrepreneurial purposes.

110. In the area of women's health, particularly reproductive health, Ghana had incorporated essential elements of the Beijing Platform for Action into its national health programme. Since 1993, "safe motherhood" activities had been pursued to further reduce maternal, infant and child mortality and morbidity. Key stakeholders from public, private and non-governmental organizations had been encouraged to deliver health services at national, regional and district levels.

111. The HIV/AIDS pandemic remained a major challenge. A National AIDS Commission had been established within the Office of the President to control and manage the problem at all levels of society. The Ministry for Women's and Children's Affairs was engaged in raising awareness among women, girls and youth in general of the risks of spreading the pandemic. The Government was particularly concerned about the transmission of the virus and the limited access of pregnant women to testing and counselling because of lack of adequate resources.

112. Her delegation strongly condemned the rise of violence against women all over the world, as it was a violation of their fundamental rights. To protect women's rights, Ghana had incorporated some of the provisions of existing international instruments into national law. A campaign to make women and girls more aware of their rights was being conducted at district and local levels, where the problem was reaching alarming proportions. At the national level, the Government was committed to strengthening the capacity of public bodies such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the Legal Aid Board and the Women and Juvenile Unit of the police to ensure that victims were properly defended at little or no cost. In conclusion, she said that gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women were essential prerequisites for the successful attainment of the targets set out in the Millennium Declaration.

113. **Ms. Loguzzo** (Argentina), referring to the report of the Secretary-General on working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour (A/57/169), read out its paragraph 26 and disputed the statement about her country's legislation. Article 80 of the Criminal Code of Argentina strongly condemned the murder of a relative or spouse, and absolutely did not recognize crimes of honour. On the other hand, it recognized extenuating circumstances for crimes of passion, which were equally applicable to women and men.

114. She drew attention to the ambiguity of the terms employed in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/2002/83), as well as the lack of knowledge concerning the legislation in force in Argentina, and regretted that the report of the Secretary-General reproduced disputed passages from that document. Her delegation would respond to the Special Rapporteur in writing.

115. **Mr. Joshi** (Nepal) said that, despite efforts at the national, regional and international levels to develop norms, principles and standards, the situation of women remained far from satisfactory, as those norms had not been duly implemented. Therefore, strategies must be better targeted and links between development programmes strengthened, with education for women and girls a priority. In Nepal, women constituted over half the population. Women's literacy rate was lower than men's, and women were more involved in the informal sector of the economy, as well as the agriculture sector, which employed about 90 per cent of women. The 1990 Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal guaranteed equal rights and freedoms to women, and several laws had been amended over the years to improve their human rights. In collaboration with civil society, awareness programmes had been undertaken to overcome prevailing social and cultural superstition and tradition. The Government had made efforts to increase women's participation in decision-making. To prevent violence against women, units had been established within police stations, both centrally and in several districts, where officers with special training dealt with those cases. The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, in cooperation with the Children's and Women's Development Council, the

Commission on Women and non-governmental organizations, was implementing various development programmes for women. Nepal would appreciate additional support for its efforts from the international community.

116. During its eleventh summit, in January 2002, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation had signed the Regional Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, which would be instrumental in addressing the problems of trafficking in women in South Asia. With regard to paragraph 39 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/170) his delegation noted that the review conference for the Convention would take place after its entry into force, and all pending matters would be considered at that time.

Rights of reply

117. **Mr. Tamir** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, to illustrate the number of innocent victims of Palestinian terror, he would cite the case of a young woman of 28 who had worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and had been killed on 10 March 2002 with 10 of her friends in the bombing of a café in Jerusalem, as well as that of an elderly woman of 72 killed in the bombing of a bus on 10 October in Tel Aviv; 12 other civilians had also been wounded. He noted that a growing number of Palestinian women were becoming involved in terrorism and suicide attacks, while Palestinian mothers supported the "heroic" acts of their children. He would have liked to hear the Observer for Palestine unequivocally condemn acts of terror and violence.

118. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that the statement by the representative of Israel falsified or distorted the facts. She recalled that, on the Palestinian side, 1,860 persons had been killed, and that Palestine condemned all acts of terror against civilians. Israel continued to oppose efforts to resume political negotiations; it preferred to pursue its military campaign, which fed the cycle of violence and increased the number of victims. The situation continued to deteriorate, blocking any progress towards a solution. Even during periods of calm, Israel had not stopped its military assaults, preventing any return to normalcy for the Palestinians living under its occupation. Once again, on 7 October, 17 Palestinians had been killed, an act which had been condemned by the United Nations Secretary-General and the international community including the United States, but which the Israeli Prime Minister had reported to be a success. Palestine believed that there was no military solution to the conflict, as the Secretary-General and the international community had repeated many times. Israeli policy and actions must reflect that same belief in order to put an end to the bloodletting and the deteriorating situation in the field.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.